

1741

hold on in the way of Truth, and Travel for
which the Lord hath called you; and to that
End, I am drawn to write you with an Epistle.
Considering the treacherous deceit
that is in the heart of Man, and the many
guilty Wiles of the A. Satan, who
seeks our destruction.

It seems it is a favour from God, that in the
midst of my violent Pains, he hath given Patience
to bear it, neither have they had Power
over my mind; but you are brought into my Remembrance
by your Prayer to God is that he
will continue to you, the continuance of his Grace
(as I know he doth to such as wait upon him)
That you may feel him at work in you; by his
Divine Power, and his Grace, you are preserved
from the evil one, and to love one another.
Which is an effect of the Operation of the Spirit
in the heart, and has been at
work in you.

EPISTLE

Advice to Friends,

To Look to the LORD;

AND

To Beware of the Snares of Satan.

By THOMAS GWIN.

Dear Friends,

SINCE it hath pleased the All-wise God, in
the dispensation of his Providence; to
suffer Me to be attended with abundance
of Pain and Infirmities, so that I have
been Lately, confined for about *five Month's*;
and been disabled from visiting Friends abroad;
and it seems probable, that I may not any
more see the Faces of some of you: Amongst
whom I have sometimes travelled, in the Service
of the Gospel. Yet a Concern remains on my
Spirit, and a Labour of Soul, that you may
hold

hold on in the way of Truth, and Travel forward, towards that Divine Inheritance unto which the Lord hath called you; and to that End, I am drawn to visit you with an Epistle, the rather, Considering the treacherous deceit lies near the Heart of Mankind, and the many cunning Wiles of the Adversary, whereby he seeks our Destruction.

I esteem it a favour from God, that in the midst of my violent Pains, he hath given Patience to bear it; neither have they had Power to make me forget *Jerusalem*; nor put you out of my Mind; but you are brought into my Remembrance, and my Prayer to God is, that he may still continue to you, the visitations of his Grace (as I know he doth to such as wait upon him.) That you may feel him at work in you, by his Divine Power, and bringing you more into a Sense of his Love, and to Love one another: Which is an effect of the Operation of his Spirit, and a sure Token, his Hand hath been at Work in you.

For many walk Loosely, and take a Liberty to themselves, that the Truth never gave them; being drawn away by their own Lusts, into the World; and some into things, that bring reproach upon their Names and Professions; and such Love the World, and the things that are in the World; but the Love of the Father is not in them; at least doth not rule nor govern in them: and tho' I Labour for the recovery of such, to a true Sense of Religion, and Devotion towards God, and this Letter is Designed for that purpose, yet I fear, my Labour will be of little effect, as to the benefit intended to some hereby, especially such as will not hear, and amend their Doings.

However



However, the Lord will be clear, and his People, whom he hath made Living witnesses for him, will be clear also; there hath been Precept upon Precept, Line upon Line, and many endeavours have been used, both by Word and Writing, to recover a People out of the Snares of Satan; that they may come to know the Lord to be their Shepherd, who will lead them into the Pastures of Life. But I have at this time, some few Particulars to warn you of; and I wish you may be Zealous and lay it to heart.

1. In the First place my Friends, let your Spirits be diligently exercised towards the Lord, who is with you, and in you, though you may not behold him: The Consideration of God's Presence, hath a very good effect on many a Traveller towards *Sion*. Oh! what fear, what reverence, what concern hath it brought upon the Mind! It hath been with them, as with our Father *Jacob*, when he perceived the Lord was present with him, he said, *how dreadful is this Place; Jacob*, did not know the Lord was there, until he pleased to manifest himself; but then, he entred into Covenant with him, and said, *if thou Lord, wilt be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, &c.* Then thou shalt surely be my God. Now those who Live out of the Consideration of the Divine presence, and how the Lord looks on all their doings, and keeps a Book of remembrance; which will be opened at Last, their own perverse wills are alive in them; and they obey not the Truth, though by reason of Education, or Conviction, they may gather together with us, yet not keeping under that holy Awe, and divine Dread, that

the presence of the great God engages in; they come not to feel his heavenly virtue, and the dropping down of the Divine Dew, whereby his Heritage is Refreshed; and so continuing to come to Meetings in a dry and formal manner, they in Length of Time question whether there be any such appearance, any manifestation of God's presence; as his People spake of, and here a Spirit of Unbelief Grows upon them, and their Hearts instead of being tendered, grow harder and harder: and they being unwatchful, and not exercised in Prayer to the great God, but withdrawing from him: He at Last withdraws from them. And then their Condition becomes extreamly Miserable; and whereas, to those who look at him, and behold him near to their Souls; He is a Protector, a Supporter and a Comforter under all cares and Griefs, and Pains, and Afflictions that attend them; and they Drink of that River, *the Streams of which refresh the City of God.* Thou that art unsensible of him, and dost not look on him, as a God nigh at hand, but afar off from thee; Thou knowest not the Vertue that is in him, and the Life that Flows from him: But he Leaves thee to thine own Corrupt will, to thine own Carnal judgment, and fleshly Liberty; whereby thou wandereſt further and further, from him, and art ready to say (in thy Practice) to the Lord, *depart from Me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Though it may be for shame, or some Temporal interest, thou art loth to Leave thy Profession, but wilt still continue to come to Meetings: It was those of Old, the Lord spake unto by *Isaiah* the Prophet: *To what end, are the Multitude of your Sacrifices*

unto

unto me, bring no more vain Oblations. And all this happens to thee, for want of a due consideration, of the Lord's being near thee.

I have read somewhere, a Significant Comparison, to this Purpose: *Of two Men, being in a Room or Chamber, where the King was, though bid from them; but the one of them, Knowing him to be present; behaves himself with Reverence and Awe; the other, not knowing the King to be there, Launches out into Loose and Wild discourse, but if he once come to perceive him there; then he alters his Behaviour, and calls for Pardon, for what he hath done amiss.* So Friends, when you come to a true Sense, how near the Lord is to you, you will then acknowledge, that all your Ability, is from and of him; and that, that self, Men so much set up and exalt, must be abased in his presence: And then you will Learn watchfulness, and the fear of the Lord; and God will hear your Prayers, which will be, that his *worthy Name may be hallowed, and his will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.* So I tenderly recommend to you this Consideration, as a means whereby you may become more acquainted with the Lord, and may be fervent in Spirit, and earnest in Religion; that your glory may go forth as brightness, which will be a blessing to you, both here and hereafter.

2. And to that end, in the Second Place, I recommend to you, to give diligent heed, that your Spirits are not Swallowed up with the love of this World: That is with Temporal or created Enjoyments, which some have followed after; to the damage of their Souls, and their great care hath been, to obtain as Large a share of those things as Possible: Some by crafty and double dealing, and ways full of deceit, and

while they could Load themselves with thick clay, they have not been apt to judge themselves, as to the ways and means of obtaining it: Though sometimes, not very honest, or honourable; and here the Eye of the Mind becomes Darkned, and they cannot see the Lord; nor behold how he looks upon them. And these are in the Condition of blind Men, that although the Sun shines never so clearly, they will not be perswaded of it, because they see it not. Many are the blessed Counsels given by our Lord, against this Worldly Spirit; which prevailed much, upon that *Pharisaical* Generation, amongst whom he conversed, and was apt to enter some better sort of People; when the Young-man, who came to him, to enquire after eternal Life; and who had kept the Commandments, yet was hindred from following Christ by reason of his great Possessions. This hath been a grievous Temptation; and a Snare, in which the Feet of many have been taken, and entangled, and may prove their Irrevocable ruine; if the Lord reclaim them not: For some are very apt, notwithstanding their wandring into the World, to bless themselves, nay and to bless God (at Least seemingly) and to say, *Father I thank thee? I am not an Whoremonger, Murtherer, a Thief, nor false Swearer; I have not reproached thy Name, as this Publican*: While yet the Devil hath as sure hold of them; as of any *Publican* whatsoever, and is secretly Leading of them in the way to Death and Destruction.

It's True, and we must acknowledge, this covetousness and Love of the World, is a vice in some reputation, whereas, *Whoredom* is shameful, *Theft* is a scandalous vice; *Murder* is horrib

and crying, *Drunkenness* is Beastly, and transforms a Man into a Brute; but *Covetousness*, always carries a Cloke, it hath a fair cover, and is thereby more apt to Deceive and many poor Souls, have been deceived by it. For the Lord's sake, and your own Souls sake, Dear Friends, watch against it; otherwise, it will bereave you of the Life and Vertue of Religion: and make your Souls as dry as the barren Heath, Let not your Hearts be overcome, with Cares of this Life; Let not Love of Money Prevail on you; it's the Root of all Evil, and some have thereby lost the Sense of God's divine presence, and have given occasion to others to observe, How do they love the World? How do they hunt after it? as their Principal Enjoyment; and so they have stood in the Way; and have been an hindrance to the Honest enquirer: Whereas did such Mind to get Spiritual riches, with equal endeavours, they might shine as Stars; and be instrumental to glorify God; who hath called them; as some have done who have Loved him, more than Riches, or Honour, more than Health or Beauty; yea his Loving kindness, hath as *David*, Long since said, *been better to them than Life*; and those keep in their places, to Praise his Holy Name.

3. And this Leads me to a third Consideration, of some, who heap up Riches, not so much for the bare Love of Money, as seeing thereby, Honour and Esteem is obtained in this World; and being as the Apostle observed, *Lovers of themselves*, they are earnestly desirous of glory; And missing the way to true glory, (which is to be nothing in our selves; and the Lord Christ to be all in all) they instead there-

of, close up with a false appearance of it; and so become desirous of vain Glory.

But many are the ways, this Enemy hath to hide his Head; and to prevent discovery in this case: Both as to its Ambitions, as well as Covetous Practices, and self is always at bottom; though it may seem, to be Concerned in some things, the People of God, may be honestly Engaged in, if such Ambitious Souls rebuke, exhort, visit or relieve the Poor; they have a regard to some self reputation in the End; and are ready to turn about, and Look at themselves, and say, I have done a very good deed, does no body take notice of it. And here People Sacrifice to their own Net, and burn Incense to their dragg; while they seek glory to themselves, and not to the worthy Name of the Lord.

Nebuchadnezzar's Ambition was gross, and easily seen through, though its possibly, yet near to too many: Is not this said he, *The House that I have built, by the might of my Power; and for the Honour of my Majesty.* And *Herod Agrippa*, was of Kin to it: *When he made an Oration, in his Royal apparet; and the People cried out, it was the Voice of God, and not of Man.* But the one of them, was driven from amongst Men, to feed with Beasts: And the other was eaten with Worms. It is a dangerous thing, for Poor creatures to rob God of his glory; let our attainments be what they will, they cannot fend off his displeasure: Let therefore what we do, be done with a real sincere intention for Gods honour; and then we shall not hunt after the honour or esteem that comes from Riches, from Learning, or great Parts; which is all indeed but vain glory; but after that honour, which comes

comes from God only, who hath said; *Those that Honour me, I will Honour*: And whatsoever gift God bestows on those Lowly humble Souls, he Sanctifies it to them, and their chief desire is, to serve him therewith.

I do therefore, in the love of God, Leave this tender Caution with you, in the Words of the Apostle; *be not desirous of vain glory: Provoking one another, Envying one another*; which is very usual amongst such vain glorious Professors, who notwithstanding their Profession, Labour hard to get the uppermost place, to get esteem and reputation to themselves; and provided, they can gain glory to themselves, they are unconcerned to glorify our Father which is in Heaven; and those become offended, and Enemies to such, as will not afford them the commendation, that they think they deserve: While a Person, sets forth their Praise, he may have their Heart, as is usually said; but if *Mordecai will not bow to Haman*; Nothing Less, then his high displeasure must follow, for such a misdemeanour. But blessed be God, who orders things otherwise, and exalts his own Seed, and People, and will exalt them always, when the High-minded, the Ambitious, and the vainglorious, will be more and more discerned, and cast at his Left Hand, where is Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of Teeth; when the Poor in Spirit will be blessed; with a full enjoyment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. My Friends, be very careful of your Company, and whom you associate with, the errors and vices too of Companions easily insinuate themselves; and I have seen Persons, whom I thought, to be well disposed to vertue, who falling in with loose Companions, have Learned
their

their ways, and have grown mighty to Drink Wine, and Men of might to mingle strong Drink, until Truth, or the reputation thereof; hath seem'd to fall in the Streets, and righteousness hath not had a way to enter upon them; and some have become hard in these exercises, to the grief of their Families, and their own ruine in the end: and Oh! that I may be made, any way instrumental, for bringing such to true Repentance; that they may abhor themselves, and remember whence they are fallen: And return to their First-Love; and the Principles of their Education.

I would my Friends, you may consider, the blessing of God on the *Rechabites*: (mentioned the 35th of *Jeremiah*) because they kept the Law of their Father, they would not Plant Vine-yards, nor drink Wine. And I am sure, a greater than *Jonadab* is here, we have a more binding precept, not to drink to excess; to be Lovers of Sobriety, Lovers of Good Men: Then we shall avoid all occasions of Intemperance, and Lusts of the flesh, Lusts of the eye, and pride of Life: And shall be watchful, against a dangerous or hurtful Society; which leads not only into an excess of Drinking, and so get the reputation of *wet Quakers*; but many times gives Temptations to Lewdness, and others are great encouragers of Pride, and if we associate with such, their Company is like Pitch; he that toucheth it, becomes defiled therewith; and such Persons losing the sense of God's presence, become more and more indifferent, as to Truth; they cast Religion and the fear of God, behind their backs: It was worthy Advice, of the Son of *Syrach*, *Seest thou a wise Man, who feareth the Lord, let thy Steps wear*

wear out the threshold of his Doors; and its sure, if we Love Wisdom, honesty and uprightness, we shall endeavour to obtain the Company of Persons thus qualified; and such will be stedfast in Coming unto Meetings; and waiting upon and Worshiping the great God. And thereby come to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; being careful to make use of all opportunities, for their Improvement, in the way of Holiness.

Whereas those, *Who keep not their Fathers commandment, and forsake the Law of their Mother, Prov. 6. 20. They become a reproach to Religion; and like the unfavoury Salt, are cast forth on the dunghill, and trodden under the feet of Men: and they turn away others from the way of righteousness; and a terrible Judgment will overtake them in the End. For if those who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as Stars in the Firmament: Then they, who turn People to Iniquity, shall be cast into outer Darkness, where their Worm will not Die, nor Fire be extinguished.*

Dear Friends, beware that these Judgments overtake none of you, neither let the Love of the World, or the gains of it, lead you into a fellowship with such dangerous Companions; but examine your own Hearts, and make diligent search in your Spirits; that the old Nature, the old Man, may be discovered, and his Goods cast out. That you may be able to say, with the Prophet; (who saw the Day of Christ, and was Glad) *Unto us a Child is Born, and the Government shall be upon his shoulders of the increase whereof there shall never be an end. And then you will join in consort, with holy Angels,*
and

and Redeemed Souls, Singing Praises and Hallelujahs, to God and the Lamb, who is Worthy for ever and ever.

5. Dear Friends, Let none trust in a bare Profession, or in being educated only in the way of Truth; and so to grow up into formality, unattended with the Life and Power of true Religion; for Godliness hath a Power and Vertue in it, and those who touch Jesus Christ, in a Living faith; they draw Vertue from him, as did the Woman with her bloody Issue, they are healed by him. There were many thronged about our blessed Lord; but they did not draw Vertue from him: But such as follow him, in the Living faith, *they do not only believe, that he is; but that he is also a rewarder of all, who diligently seek him*, and they grow in faith, in hope, and in Love; finding God's Word near in their Souls; which is quick and Powerful, and they delight to Lay open before him, the thoughts and intents of their Hearts: When thou, who abidest in a formal dry Profession, and only a customary coming to Meetings, Losest this Divine Sense, and favour of Life to thy Soul, and so growest more and more unacquainted with his Dealings: Thou often hearest how he revives the Spirit of the Humble, and the Hearts of the contrite; but thou art not revived, and the reason is, because of thy dependings upon an empty Profession, and thy not Labouring to lay up treasure in Heaven, that thy Heart may be there also.

Dear Friends, it was a certain Truth, spoken Long since, by that Kingly Prophet *David*; and is confirmed to the Lord's Heritage to this very Day. *God is good unto Israel, Especially*

to such, as are of upright Hearts; they partake of the influence of his Love, and the Lifting up the Light of his Countenance upon them, doth gladden their Hearts; beyond the Increase of outward things. And these are the Godly; whom the great God sets apart for himself; and their humble walking before him, in the ways of Justice, and Temperance and Godliness, is more acceptable to him, *than Thousands of Rams*; or then to give *our First Born for our Transgression*; or the *Fruit of our Body, for the Sin of our Soul*.

6. I would advise you, duly to Consider your Later End. I know, this is tedious to flesh and blood, and to the carnal Mind: But it is a Lesson, the Lord is teaching Some; through their many Weaknesses, and Bodily ailments, they see their dissolution draws nigh, and they look to the Lord, to help and to succour, and bear them up, that when they drink Waters of Affliction, their Teacher may not be removed from them, and those see the Goodness of God, and under all are engaged to praise him, and bless his Name, who hath taught them *so to number their days, that they may apply their Hearts unto Wisdom*.

And indeed Friends, if Sickness and Infirmities have this blessed effect upon our Souls, we may be thankful to God for visiting us therewith, and shall in the midst of it all commemorate his Goodness, and great Mercy towards us: This is a Truth that all will, I suppose, acknowledge, and then I would have you consider the miserable Case of such as forget their Maker, and think not of their latter end, though they may rejoice for a season, it will be but like the Crackling of Thorns under the Pot, which are
soon

soon consumed; and though the Strength and Health of our Constitutions may keep off some Ailments that others labour under, yet no Strength, Riches nor Wisdom, will ward off old Age, and the unavoidable Stroke of Death. Happy are they that think of it betime, and make due Preparation to meet with it: *Oh! that they were wise, (said holy Moses) that they would consider their latter end:* And where a People walk in the Light, and retain a sense of the Lord's being near them, he teaches them this profitable Lesson that they may not be surprized nor distressed at last, it being what they often meditate upon.

And, dear Friends, it's what in the Love of God I recommend unto you as necessary to warn you to love this World less, and the Lord God above all, and to shun all vain-glorying in your Parts, Persons, Riches or Abilities, that God alone may be exalted through our Lord Jesus Christ, now and for ever, *Amen.*

Many other Particulars I might advise you of, as to avoid all the Transports of Anger, and to let your Moderation appear unto all Men, to shun all Occasions of Wantonness, and all Hard-heartedness and Oppression: But I know my Friends, we have one just and holy Teacher, who never fails to teach us those Lessons, who desire to learn of him: He will lead you in all the Ways of Righteousness, and in the midst of the Path of Judgment; and those who are taught by him, come to an Establishment in Righteousness, and with such I rejoice in Spirit, and am comforted in the Consideration of your orderly Walking before God and Man in that Wisdom that is pure and peaceable, *gentle and easie to be entreated:* In which, my God preserve us always

ways in the Fellowship of the Spirit, which is compared to Dew of *Hermon*, or the Rain that came down upon the Mountain of *Sion*, where the Lord commanded his Blessing to rest. Your Eye beholds your Teacher, and you hear Christ's Heavenly Voice, and follow him, and he gives unto you Eternal Life.

But considering the many Wiles of the Adversary, and the Deceit that lurks unseen near many unwatchful Souls, I sent forth this Caution, hoping it may be of Service to withdraw some, as out of the Snares of Satan, then is my End answered, and therein shall I be glad, and give God the Glory.

And to all you who love the Truth, and walk faithfully therein: This is a Salutation of unfeigned Love, which I was inclined to Visit you with, Seeing I am through much weakness, disabled from Visiting of you Personally. I hope you will accept this token of Brotherly kindness, in the same affection, in which it is sent you, By

Your Friend and fellow Traveller;

T. G.

LONDON, Printed and Sold by J. Sowle in
White-Hart-Court in Gracious-Street, 1709.

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Yours By

John P. ...



T. G.

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White-Hart-Court in Cannon-Street, 1799.

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